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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes the articles published in "Research in the Teaching of English" during the first ten years of publication, a period that represents the influence of two editors. Among the findings were that studies related to composition have been most numerous, followed by studies related to language. Studies related to literature have been somewhat less numerous, but the proportions have remained constant under the two editors. Studies focusing on characteristics of learners have been numerous and have increased since 1972; those related to teaching-methodology have decreased since 1972. Articles related to secondary grades and college level were numerous in the first six volumes; those related to preschool and elementary grades have increased in the later volumes. Descriptive studies have outnumbered experimental studies, and quasi-experimental studies have outnumbered true experimental studies during both editorships. Case studies have increased since 1972. Most of the articles were written by single authors, the overwhelming majority of whom were affiliated with a college or university. Less than 15% of the authors contributed a second article, and less than 5% contributed a third. (AA)

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A SURVEY OF RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH, VOLUMES 1-10

by

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The first issue of RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH was published in the spring of 1967. Supported in part by funds from the Research Foundation of the National Council of Teachers of English, the new journal was intended as a medium to disseminate reports of research related to the concerns of the constituency served by the Council. The first editor was Richard Braddock of the University of Iowa, and his associate editor was Nathan S. Blount of the University of Wisconsin. This editorial team served the journal during the first six years of its existence, editing two issues each year, one in the spring and one in the fall. In 1973, Alan Purves of the University of Illinois became the editor; his associate editor was James Hoetker of the Florida State University. Their first volume (Volume 7) consisted of three numbers issued in the spring, fall, and winter, as did the three subsequent volumes.

The first ten volumes contain 176 articles, excluding bibliographies, announcements, and letters to the editor. Of this total, 87 articles appeared in volumes 1-6, and 89 appeared in volumes 7-10. Although these articles are by no means all of the published research related to the concerns of teachers of English, a systematic review of them provides an interesting and informative profile of the research activity related to the teaching of English during the past decade. These articles selected from the larger number of manuscripts submitted to the editors, while they may reveal something of the particular preferences of the editors and consulting editors, should reveal a great deal about the kinds of problems deemed worthy of research effort during the period, as well as something of the kinds of research designs employed, and the institutional affiliations of the researchers.

The topics dealt with in the articles can be categorized in at least two ways, one according to the different sub-topics of English and language arts, and the other according to the various pedagogical concerns of the researchers. For purposes of this study, the first set of categories consists of language, literature, composition, drama, non-print media, reading, and a miscellaneous category labeled all others. The second set of categories consists of curriculum, teaching methods, evaluation methods, research methods, learner characteristics, and all others. It is recognized that this selection of categories is arbitrary, but however unsatisfactory it might be for some purposes, it appears to be a feasible way of treating the data of this study.

The resulting tabulations are presented in Table 1 and Table 2. It should be noted that because some studies dealt with more than one sub-discipline of English, the total number of articles indicated in Table 1 exceeds 176, the total number of articles published. The percentage figures, however, are computed from the total number of articles published. For the pedagogical topics included in Table 2, each article was classified according to what appeared to be the dominant concern, and the resulting total equals the number of articles published. Data presented in these and subsequent tables treat volumes 1-6 and 7-10 separately so that the products of the two different editors can be compared.

Comparisons of raw data in Table 1 (statistical treatment beyond computations of percentages was deemed unnecessary for purposes of this study) indicate that studies related to composition have been more numerous than those related to any other topic, but that their percentage has declined slightly during the last four years of the ten-year period. Studies related to language rank second in total number, and their relative proportion has

Table 1

Articles published in RTE, volumes 1-10, arranged according to sub-topic of English and language arts

Sub-topic	Volumes 1-6		Volumes 7-10		Volumes 1-10	
	number	per cent	number	per cent	number	per cent
language	16	18.39	27	30.34	43	24.43
literature	13	14.94	14	15.73	27	15.34
composition	28	32.18	23	25.84	51	28.98
drama	1	1.15	0	0	1	.56
non-print media	1	1.15	0	0	1	.56
reading	10	11.49	11	12.36	21	11.93
all others	22	25.29	21	23.60	43	24.43

shown an increase during the latter sub-period. Studies related to literature and reading have remained almost constant in number, as have those included in the all others category. It is interesting that despite the fact that the importance of attention to drama and non-print media has been emphasized recently in various quarters, only one study in each category has been published in NCTE's research journal, and both of them were published before 1973.

In the pedagogical categories (Table 2), studies dealing with learner characteristics have been most numerous in both sub-periods, and have shown a remarkable increase since 1972. Studies dealing with various aspects of teaching methodology rank second in number, but most of them were published

Table 2

Articles published in RTE, volumes 1-10, arranged according to sub-topic of pedagogical concern

Sub-topic	Volumes 1-6		Volumes 7-10		Volumes 1-10	
	number	per cent	number	per cent	number	per cent
curriculum	12	13.79	10	11.24	22	12.50
teaching method	19	21.84	6	6.74	25	14.20
evaluation method	11	12.64	5	5.62	16	9.10
research method	6	6.90	10	11.24	16	9.10
learner characteristics	25	28.74	43	48.31	68	38.64
all others	14	16.09	15	16.85	29	16.48

prior to 1973. Articles categorized under curriculum have shown only a slight decrease during the second sub-period, while those related to research methodology have almost doubled in number. Again, there appears to be a puzzling mismatch between the concerns of a large segment of the English-teaching profession and the research studies that have found their way into print: despite the concern over accountability and testing, studies related to methods of evaluation are not numerous, and their number has been greatly reduced since 1972.

As shown in Table 3, the articles were categorized by grade level: pre-school, elementary, secondary, and college; but for a sizable number of articles, grade-level categories were not applicable. As in Table 1,

Table 3

Articles published in RTE, volumes 1-10, arranged according to grade level addressed by researcher

Grade Level	Volumes 1-6		Volumes 7-10		Volumes 1-10	
	number	per cent	number	per cent	number	per cent
pre-school	2	2.30	4	4.49	6	3.41
elementary	14	16.09	17	19.10	31	17.61
secondary	33	37.93	20	22.47	53	30.11
college	19	21.84	11	12.36	30	17.04
not applicable	24	27.59	43	48.31	67	38.07

the categories are not mutually exclusive, since some studies included subjects in more than one grade-level category.

Since the school subject called English usually has no separate identity in elementary school, it is not surprising that the largest number of studies focused on pupils in the secondary grades. During the latter subperiod, however, there was a slight increase in the numbers of studies dealing with children in the elementary grades and in the pre-school level. At the same time, there was a noticable decrease in the number of articles dealing with English at the college level. The increase in the second subperiod of articles not related to a grade level is related to the larger number of articles classified as review-commentary, to be discussed below.

Any attempt to classify the various articles published in RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH according to pre-established design categories is bound to be highly arbitrary and generally unsatisfactory. Nevertheless,

in a survey of the kind presented here, such an attempt seems necessary. Consequently, the decision was made to use (with some modifications) a set of headings that has been widely used in textbooks on research methods (cf. Van Dalen, 1966). The set of category labels selected for this survey include analytical comparison, case studies, correlational, other descriptive, historical, quasi-experimental, true experimental, review-commentary, and all others. Tabulation of the articles according to design is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Articles published in RTE, volumes 1-10, arranged according to dominant research design

Design	Volumes 1-6		Volumes 7-10		Volumes 1-10	
	number	per cent	number	per cent	number	per cent
analytical comparison	24	27.59	20	22.47	44	25.00
case studies	1	1.15	5	5.62	6	3.41
correlational	5	5.75	1	1.12	6	3.41
other descriptive	12	13.79	13	14.61	25	14.20
historical	0	0	1	1.12	1	.56
quasi-experimental	12	13.79	12	13.48	24	13.63
true experimental	5	5.75	1	1.12	6	3.41
review-commentary	13	14.94	26	29.21	39	22.16
all others	15	17.24	10	11.24	25	14.20
totals	87	100	89	100	176	100

The largest number of studies in a single category appears under the analytical comparison heading. This category could be treated as a subcategory of descriptive, but it was devised to accommodate studies that were observed to have certain distinguishing characteristics, i.e., there were rather detailed statistical analyses of data used to compare selected variables, such as the casual and careful oral language styles of average and superior fifth grade boys and girls (Jensen, 1973).

The second largest category was review-commentary, and the number of articles in this category doubled in the period after 1972. The reason for the increase is obvious to readers of RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH: under the Purves editorship the third number of each volume was devoted almost entirely to reviews of various kinds. Other descriptive studies are also numerous, and the relative proportions are almost unchanged from the first sub-period to the second. While studies intended to meet the rigid requirements of true experimental design have been few (with only one published since 1972), quasi-experimental studies have been relatively numerous (and equal in number) in both sub-periods. Correlational studies have also been few, and their numbers declined after 1972. Matching the small numbers of true experimental studies and correlational studies, but reversing their trends, are the case studies.

In recent years, much has been said about the merits of case studies (a la Jean Piaget and Roger Brown), and apparently researchers and editors are beginning to recognize their potential value. Only one historical study was published in the journal during the ten-year period, and it was published during the latter sub-period.

An analysis of patterns of authorship of articles published in the first ten volumes of RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH is presented in Table 5. Single-author articles account for an impressive majority (approximately 70%) of the articles. Two authors collaborated on several articles (approximately 22%), and three or more authors worked together on articles comprising the remaining articles (approximately 8%). As in Tables 1 and 3, totals shown

Table 5

Articles published in RTE, volumes 1-10, arranged according to number of authors and institutional affiliation of authors

number of authors	Volumes 1-6 number	Volumes 1-6 per cent	Volumes 7-10 number	Volumes 7-10 per cent	Volumes 1-10 number	Volumes 1-10 per cent
one	59	67.82	65	73.03	124	70.45
two	19	21.84	19	21.35	38	21.59
more than two	9	10.34	5	5.62	14	7.95
affiliation						
college and university	72	82.76	80	89.88	152	86.36
corporation	5	6.90	2	2.25	7	3.98
regional laboratory	2	2.30	0	0	2	1.14
all others	16	18.39	11	12.36	27	15.34

under affiliation exceed the total number of articles published; the reason in this instance is that there are more authors than articles, and

collaborating authors do not always represent the same kind of institutional affiliation. The overwhelming majority of articles had one or more authors affiliated with a college or university (approximately 87%). Authors affiliated with corporations have been few and have declined in number since 1972. It is surprising that so few articles by authors affiliated with regional laboratories were published in the early days of the journal, but the subsequent demise of the laboratories accounts for the absence of such articles in recent issues. Authors affiliated with all other kinds of institutions, including public school districts, account for only 15% of the total number of articles published during the ten-year period. While not particularly surprising, this small percentage is lamentable.

Additional information, not presented in tables, was gathered on the number of authors who had more than one article published in RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH. Of the 203 authors who wrote or collaborated on articles, 168 contributed to only one article. Twenty-eight authors wrote or collaborated on two articles. Seven authors wrote or collaborated on three articles. No individual had more than three articles published during the first ten years of the journal's existence.

On the basis of data collected in this study, several generalizations can be made about articles published in the first ten volumes of RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH.

The topics studied

Studies related to composition have been most numerous, followed by studies related to language(which have increased in relative proportion since 1972). Studies related to literature have been somewhat less numerous,

but the proportions have remained constant during the two sub-periods. Despite the emphasis currently placed on the educational value of drama and nonprint media they are represented by only one article each, and these articles were published prior to 1973.

Studies focusing on various characteristics of learners (e.g., language performance, response to literature) have been numerous and have increased in number since 1972. Those related to teaching methodology have decreased in number since 1972. While the articles seem to reflect an increased interest in research methodology since 1972, there is a decrease in the number of articles dealing with evaluation. With the great concern that has been expressed over the abuses of testing, more research in this particular area would seem to be called for.

Grade level

Articles related to secondary grades and college level were numerous in the first six volumes. Those related to preschool and elementary grades and those not related to specific grade levels increased in volumes 7-10.

Research design

Various kinds of descriptive studies have outnumbered experimental studies, and quasi-experimental studies have outnumbered true experimental studies in both sub-periods. Although still few in number, case studies have shown an increase since 1972. With the expansion of the journal to three numbers per volume since 1972, there has been an increase in the number of review-commentary type articles.

Authorship

Most of the articles were written by a single author; less than one-fourth of them were written by two authors, and less than one-tenth were written by three or more authors. The overwhelming majority were written by authors affiliated with a college or university.

Most of the authors represented wrote or collaborated on a single article. Less than 15% of the authors contributed a second article, and less than 5% contributed a third article. No author was represented by more than three articles during the ten-year period.

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